THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) As per the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics data, the export-import growth and balance of trade position for the year 1996-97, 1997-98, 1998-99 and April—Jan. 1999-2000 is as under:

(US $ Million)

Year	Exports	%change	Imports	%change	Balance of trade
1996-97	33470	5.3	39132	6.7	-5662
1997-98	35006	4.6	41484	6.0	-6478
1998-99*	33641	3.7	41886	7.9	-8245
1999-2000* (Apr.—Jan)	30221	11.3	38142	9.0	-7921

*Data are provisional and subject to change; growth rates calculated are over the corresponding provisional figures of 1997-98 and 1998-99 (Apr—Jan)

(b) and (c) A favourable balance of trade which is the excess of exports over imports contributes to improved balance of payment. A number of steps have been taken to further enhance the export growth which include reduction in transaction cost through decentralisation, simplification of procedures and various other measures as enumerated in the Exim Policy. Steps have also been taken to promote exports through multilateral and bilateral initiatives, identification of thrust sectors and focus regions.

Survey for sick industries in NER

1083. SHRIMATI BASANTI SARMA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the details of steps taken by Government to conduct any survey during the last five years in NER, particularly in Assam to find out the various small, medium and big industrial establishments lying in sick position;

(b) the details thereof, State-wise/district-wise; and

(c) the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN): (a) to (c) Data on sickness of industrial units assisted by banks in the country is compiled by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

According to the information available, the number of sick units as at the end of March, 1998 is as follows:—

State	SSI sick	Non-SSI/sick/Weak
Assam	15774	44
Meghalaya	4076	2
Arunachal Pradesh	456	2
Nagaland	1386	2
Manipur	1919	2
Tripura	2011	6
Mizoram	615	—
Total	26237	58

The Government has taken a number of steps for revival of sick industrial units which, *inter-alia,* include guidelines of Reserve Bank of India to banks, amalgamation of sick units with healthy units, setting up of Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) under the Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provision) Act, National Renewal Fund, National Equity Fund etc.

Purchase of TOBACCO by Russia

1084. SHRI RAMACHANDRAIAH RUMANDLA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Russia has agreed to purchase Indian tobacco during the recent Indo-Russian trade talks held in Delhi in January, 2000;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) other decisions taken for diversifying and expanding bilateral trade in hi-tech items?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (c) During the 6th Session of Indo-Russian Working Group on Trade and Economic Cooperation (WGTEC) Govt, of India have requested the Russian side to allocate sufficient rupee funds to Russian cigarette factories on credit terms to enable them to purchase Indian tobacco. The Russian side agreed to consider the proposal expeditiously. It was also agreed that an Indian delegation would visit Russia shortly to pursue the matter and to explore